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THE OPERATIONS OF THE 414TH INFANTRY  
(LESS 2D BATTALION) (104TH INFANTRY DIVISION)  
IN THE SAALE RIVER OFFENSIVE  
AND THE CAPTURE OF HALLE, GERMANY,  
14 - 19 APRIL 1945.  
(CENTRAL EUROPEAN CAMPAIGN)  
(Personal Experience of a Regimental Headquarters  
and Headquarters Company Commander)

Type of operation described: TASK FORCE IN ATTACK OF A RIVER  
LINE AND CAPTURE OF A CITY.

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OPERATIONS OF THE 414TH INFANTRY (LESS 2D BATTALION) (104TH INFANTRY DIVISION) IN THE SAALE RIVER OFFENSIVE AND THE CAPTURE OF HALLE, GERMANY, 14-19 APRIL 1945.

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INTRODUCTION

HALLE! Germany's tenth largest city, (population 210,000) still stands on the east bank of the Saale River. Her industries, business and residential sections are practically untouched by the Allied Force's powerful air and artillery attacks. (1)

This city was of great importance to the German<sup>s</sup> reaction because of its location, industries and rich agricultural lands. All the roads and railroads connecting Berlin, Breslau, Leipzig, and Frankfurt-on-the-Main funnel through here. The Nazi war machine was using her industries in the production of many war materials such as: half-tracks, gasoline, oils, rubber, cement, dyes and coal. (2)

The agricultural lands produced great quantities of food for the fighting troops, the chief agricultural products being sugar beets, wheat, rye, potatoes and cocoa beans. (3)

The Saale River added to Halle's commercial importance. Since it is navigable from Halle to the Elbe, the Saale was used as a means of water transportation between many cities in Germany. (4)

During Hitler's regime, this city was a powerful center of Nazi organization until one morning in April 1945. On this day, the city was captured by a powerful Tank-Infantry

(1) A-6, p. 100; A-3, p. 336-337; Personal knowledge; (2) A-6, p. 100; Personal knowledge; (3) A-6, p. 100; Personal knowledge; (4) A-6, p. 100; A-3, p. 336; Personal knowledge.

team of the First United States Army. (5)

This monograph covers the operation that was responsible for the push across the Saale River and the capture of Halle. Task Force Kelleher, consisting of the 414th Infantry (less 2d Battalion)(104th Infantry Division) in the Saale River offensive and capture of the city of Halle from 14-19 April 1945.

Before going into a detailed study of this operation, let us recap briefly the events in Germany leading up to the actions of this Task Force.

On Easter Sunday, 1 April 1945, two powerful armored spearheads of the First and Ninth United States Armies made contact at Lippstadt, west of Paderborn, thus completing the encirclement of the "Ruhr Pocket", (See Map 1) as well as completing the greatest double envelopment in the history of warfare. (6)

These events dealt a paralyzing blow to the once powerful German War Machine. Some 4,000 square miles of rich industrial area <sup>was</sup> ~~were~~ isolated, and approximately 325,000 German troops, including elements of seven Corps and nineteen Infantry Divisions, were trapped. (7)

The major advantage gained by the Allies was that they now had a huge bridgehead across the Rhine River from which they could launch their drive to the east and in the end make contact with the Russians. (8)

Leaving part of the forces of the First and Ninth United States Armies to reduce the Ruhr Pocket the Supreme Commander, (General Dwight D. Eisenhower) now turned his attention to the east. (9)

(5) A-3, p. 341; A-6, p. 100; (6) A-1, p. 51; A-5, p. 104; A-9, p. 50; (7) A-5, p. 105; A-8, p. 269, 270; (8) A-5, p. 105, 106; (9) A-5, p. 105, 106; A-1, p. 54; A-8, p. 269, 270.

After a careful study of the terrain, weather and enemy, he found that he had three possible avenues open to him to drive deep into the heart of Germany:

- (1) Cut across the north by way of Berlin to the Baltic Sea. (10)
- (2) In the center, spearhead across from Kassel through Erfurt and Leipzig to Dresden. (11)
- (3) To the south, spearhead through Nurnburg and Regensburg by the Danube Valley into Austria. (12)

After carefully analyzing the routes open to him, General Eisenhower decided that the spearhead through the center offered the greatest advantages. This attack would cut the remaining German Forces in two and gain the remainder of her important industrial and agricultural areas. Also, once the defending forces were split and contact gained with the Russians, the Allies could turn either to the south or north and gradually reduce either or both pockets. (13)

For this operation, the central group of armies, making up the 12th Army Group under command of General Omar N. Bradley, was chosen and given the mission of driving to the east to seize any opportunity of capturing bridges over the Elbe River, and be prepared to continue the drive to the east or until contact was made with the Russian Forces. (14)

The Central Group of Armies at this time were the First, Third, and Ninth United States Armies, the Ninth United States Army being reassigned from the operational control of the 21st Army Group to the command of the 12th Army Group for this specific operation. (15)

(10) A-5, p. 105, 106; (11) A-5, p. 105, 106; A-1, p. 54;  
(12) A-5, p. 105, 106; (13) (14) A-5, p. 106; (15) A-8, p. 106.

### THE GENERAL SITUATION

1 April 45 found the Central Armies disposed along a general north-south line Minden, Bielefeld, Kassel, and Fulda. (16) (See Map 2) The next 6 days were spent re-organizing and regrouping Corps, expanding and consolidating positions, and making preparations for the drive to the east. (17)

An intelligence evaluation of the enemy and enemy held terrain after proper interpretation, revealed to the attacking forces that a defensive position was being organized between their present positions and the Weser River. These positions extended generally along a north-south line, and east of Paderborn, Kassel, and Warburg. It was apparent that the enemy was defending and delaying just long enough to withdraw the remainder of his forces behind the Weser River, where he could set up a stronger defensive positions. (18)

Looking further to the east, in addition to the Weser River, there were other major obstacles that lay in the advance of the eastward drive. The most important of these being the Harz Mountains, Saale River, and finally the Elbe <sup>Not as Map 2</sup> River. Any or all of these could be quickly organized into excellent defensive positions. The terrain throughout this area was generally rolling, some was open, some wooded. The only mountainous area, through the Harz Mountains, was heavily wooded and rough terrain. (19)

Knowing the possible enemy capabilities, the minimum amount of time was used in the preparation for the drive to

(16) A-1, p. 52, A-8, p. 270; (17) A-1, p. 54; A-8, p. 271; (18) A-1, p. 54, A-2, p. 66, A-5, p. 106, 107; (19) A-3, p. 327.

the east. The 12th Army Group on 5 April issued a letter of instruction for the eastward advance for the Central Group of Armies. (20)

At this time the First United States Army was the central army, with the Ninth United States Army on the north and the Third United States Army on the south. (See Map 2) The assigned boundary between the First and Ninth was: Paderborn, Brakel, Dassel, Bad Grund, and Blankenburg. (21)

The assigned boundary between the First and Third United States Armies was: Ziegenhain, northeast to Witzenhausen, Heiligenstadt, Mulhasen, and Sommerda. (22)

For the purpose of this study there will be no further mention of the Third and Ninth United States Armies except to say that their drive continued to the east, eventually making contact with the Russians in the vicinity of the Elbe River. (23)

By 6 April the First United States Army was ready for its advance to the east. At this time it was composed of XVIII Airborne, V, III, and VII Corps. The XVIII Airborne and III Corps were to remain behind to reduce that portion of the Ruhr Pocket that lay in their respective zones; the V and VII Corps were to attack to the east with the mission of advancing to the east on the axis Leipzig - Dresden to gain contact with the Russians and seize any opportunity for a bridgehead over the Elbe River. (24)

The First United States Army attacked with its two corps abreast, the VII Corps on the north and the V Corps on the south. The boundary between Corps was: Rhoden

(20) A-1, p. 54; (21) A-1, p. 55; (22) A-1, p. 55;  
(23) A-9, p. 51; A-7, p. 373; A-8, p. 309; (24) A-1, p. 54-57.

east to Warburg, (inclusive to the VII Corps) Gottingen (inclusive to V Corps) Kelbra (inclusive to the VII Corps). (25)

The V Corps will not be referred again in this monograph, only to say their advance continued in the right zone of the First United States Army along a general east-west line, Kassel-Leipzig, and on 25 April 45, contact was made with the Russians east of the Maulde River. (26)

#### THE VII CORPS DRIVE TO NORDHAUSEN

From its position, along a north-south line, extending from Ottbergen to Liebenau, (See Map 2) the Corps moved out with the 3d Armored Division (plus 414th Infantry attached) in the spearhead. The 104th Infantry Division consisting of the 413th, and 415th Infantry and <sup>the</sup> 385th, 386th, 387th and 802d Field Artillery, followed the Armor, mopping-up and reducing by-passed enemy. The 414th Infantry previously had been ~~attached~~ from the Division and attached to the 3d Armored Division. (27)

The 1st Infantry Division was on the north of the 3d Armored Division. From its assembly area in the vicinity of Peckelsheim, the division moved up and crossed the Weser River in the vicinity of Wehrden. Its attack continued to the east and entered the west end of the Harz Mountains, where it continued fighting until 20 April. (28)

The 3d Armored Division and the 104th Infantry Division reached the full momentum of their eastward drive on 7 April 1945. The first major obstacle confronting them was the

(25) A-1, p. 55; (26) A-1, p. 65; A-9, p. 51; A-2, p. 69; (27) A-1, p. 57; A-3, p. 323; (28)

Weser River. It was essential that the Corps establish a bridgehead on the east bank in order to continue on their mission with the least possible delay. The advance of the spearhead to the river met with stiff resistance. The enemy was trying desperately to delay the attack long enough to withdraw his forces across the river. German defenses consisted of strong points in all villages and numerous road blocks. To further delay our forces the enemy systematically destroyed all bridges. These actions stopped the 3d Armored Division short of the river. (29)

At this point, the 415th Infantry (104th Infantry Division) was brought up from the rear and given the mission of crossing the Weser River on the night of 7-8 April and establishing a bridgehead on the east bank of the river in the vicinity of Beverungen. This was completed by early morning 8 April 1945. On the following day the Armor began pouring across the bridge and breaking out of the bridgehead to continue to the east. Its next mission was to by-pass the southern edge of the Harz Mountains and capture the city of Nordhausen. (30)

When the crossing was completed the spearhead force again took up its original formation. The drive was generally east to Northeim, then southeast to Nordhausen. The enemy opposition was practically nil during this attack, and that encountered was either by-passed or overrun. A large portion of the enemy had withdrawn to the Harz Mountains. (31)

The leading elements of the 3d Armored Division (at-

(29) A-4, p. 247; A-3, p. 323; A-1, p. 58; (30) A-4, p. 247; A-1, p. 58; A-2, p. 66; A-3, p. 325; (31) A-4, p. 247; A-3, p. 326.

tached 414th Infantry) by-passed the southern edge of the Harz Mountains and arrived in Nordhausen on 10 April. The corps commander quickly realized that the enemy was being trapped in the mountains and very likely would attempt to break out. Since the corp's leading elements had by-passed the mountains, this left it's left flank exposed. Immediately the 413th Infantry (104th Infantry Division) was ordered to move to the vicinity of Bad Lauterberg, Bad Sachsa, Walkenried and Elltich along the southern edge of the mountains and establish road blocks east through the area to protect the corp's left flank and hold the enemy in the mountains. (See Map 3) The 104th Reconnaissance Troops in the vicinity of Herzberg (104th Infantry Division) was given the mission of maintaining contact between the 1st Infantry Division and 104th Infantry Division. (32)

The 104th Infantry Division Commander soon realized that the mission given the 413th Infantry was too great for an Infantry Regiment and requested the corps commander to revert the 414th Infantry to division's control. As a result of this request, on 11 April, the corps commander momentarily halted the 3d Armored Division's advance, at which time the 414th Infantry (less 2d Battalion) reverted to 104th Infantry Division control. The mission of blocking the southern exit of the Harz Mountains, north of Nordhausen and right of the 413th Infantry (104th Infantry Division) was assigned the 414th Infantry (less the 2d Battalion). (33)

The forward movement of the 3d Armored Division was

(32) A-4, p. 249; A-3, p. 327, 328, 333; (33) A-3, p. 333; A-4, p. 250.

resumed on 12 April 1945 and the 415th Infantry was to continue its mopping up mission behind the armor. (34)

On 12 April 1945, the 104th Infantry Division Commander, upon Corp's order, directed the commanding officer of the 414th Infantry (Colonel Gerald C. Kelleher) to form an armored spearhead and make plans for the offensive of the Saale River and the capture of the city of Halle. This task force would be prepared to move out at 0800 hours, 14 April 1945 and was to be called "Task Force Kelleher". (35)

#### THE ORGANIZATION OF TASK FORCE KELLEHER

On 12 April 1945 from the headquarters of the 414th Infantry (less 2d Battalion) located in Nordhausen, Colonel Kelleher began the task of organizing and preparing the Task Force for its mission. For this operation the task force commander was given the following units: 750th Tank Battalion (less one company); 817th Tank Destroyer Battalion (less two companies); Company B, 329th Engineer Battalion; 386th and 802d Field Artillery Battalions; Battery B, 555th AAA Artillery Battalion; 104th Reconnaissance Troop and Company B, 87th Chemical Battalion. (37)

After carefully analyzing the mission, terrain and enemy capabilities the Task Force Commander decided to organize his units into two smaller Task Forces, one to be named after the commanding officer of the 1st Battalion (Lt. Col. Robert C. Clark) and to be referred to as Task Force Clark. It was to consist of the 1st Battalion, 414th Infantry; Companies B and C 750th Tank Battalion; one platoon of the Light Tank

(34) A-3, p. 329; A-4, p. 250; (35) A-2, p. 69; A-3, p. 327; (37) A-3, p. 337; Personal knowledge, statement of Col. Kelleher, 24 Nov 47.

Company, 750th Light Tank Battalion; one platoon of Company A, 817th Tank Destroyer Battalion; 104th Reconnaissance Troop, (104th Infantry Division); and 386th Field Artillery Battalion. The other Task Force would be named after the Commanding Officer of the 3d Battalion, 414th Infantry (Lt. Colonel Leon J. Rouge) and to be referred to as Task Force Rouge. It was to consist of the 3d Battalion (414th Infantry); two platoons of Light Tank Company, 750th Light Tank Battalion; two platoons of Company A and the Reconnaissance Company, 817th Tank Destroyer Battalion; 802d Field Artillery Battalion; and Company B, 87th Chemical Battalion. (38)

Company B, 29th Engineer Battalion; Battery B, 555th AAA Battalion and separate unit of the 414th Infantry were to remain under the direct control of the task force commander. (39)

#### THE TASK FORCE PLAN OF ATTACK

The Task Force Commander realized that he had only a short time in which to prepare plans for his attack and accordingly made a hasty plan based upon information obtained largely from a map study. From this study, he determined that the objective assigned him was approximately fifty-three (53) miles to the east and in enemy territory. (40)

The terrain in his sector of advance was flat and rolling, with few or no woods, except to the north around the southern exit of the Harz Mountains. The only major obstacles were the Saale River and the city of Halle. (See Map 3)

(38) A-3, p. 337; Personal knowledge; (39) A-3, p. 337; Personal knowledge; Statement of Col. Kelleher and Lt. Col. Clark, 24 Nov 47; (40) Personal knowledge; statement of Col. Kelleher, 24 Nov 47; A-3, p. 336.

These were the only likely places where the enemy could prepare a good hasty defense. (41)

The city was built of Masonry Construction and its buildings ranged in height from one to six stories. Almost the entire area of the city lay on the west bank of the Saale River. Regardless of the direction from which the commander might attack, he would have to cross the river before he could reach the city. (42)

The Saale River is a tributary of the Elbe. As it flows by the city of Halle, it is cut into several smaller canals. The river is from 200 to 300 feet in width, with an average depth of approximately 10 feet. (43)

From this information, Colonel Kelleher made his plan of attack. The mission given his smaller Task Forces was to attack direct east, seize any opportunity of capturing a bridge over the Saale River and divide the enemy through the center into as many smaller groups as possible. After this division, they would reduce one part or group of the city then the other. (44)

The formation for the attack would be Task Force Rouge in the spearhead with Task Force Clark following at a fifteen minute interval. The Task Forces would be motorized, by using all available trucks and riding the Infantry on the tanks. (45)

Company B, 329th Engineer Battalion would be in general support of the Task Force and follow generally along with the Headquarters Group. The 555th AAA Battalion would fur-

(41) Personal knowledge; (42) Personal knowledge; (43) A-3, p. 336; (44) Personal knowledge; statement of Col. Kelleher and Lt. Col. Clark, 24 Nov 47; (45) Personal knowledge; statement of Lt. Col. Clark, 24 Nov 47.

nish anti-aircraft protection of the moving column and the artillery of the Task Force. (46)

The separate companies of the 414th Infantry would remain generally with the Headquarters Groups. With the anti-tank Company giving anti-tank protection to this group. (47)

The general route of advance of the Task Force would be along the main highway leading east from Nordhausen through Garshback, Rossia, Wallhausen, Sangerhausen and then to Reinstedt. (See Map 3) At this point, the two Task Forces were to separate, with Lt. Col. Rouge's force continuing its advance on the North along the highway through Eisleben, Heifta, Bennstedt, Nieteleben and across the river into the city of Halle. (48)

Lt. Col. Clark's Force at Reinstadt would turn to the southeast and attack through Holdenstedt, Grossosterhausen, Rathenskirmback, Hornburg, Alberstedt, Teutschenthal, Zscherben to the river and into the city. (49)

The line of departure would be the forward line now held by the friendly forces, which at the time of the attack, was the city of Reinstedt. This city was held by the 415th Infantry (104th Infantry Division). (50)

After the 3d Armored Division's short halt on 11 April at Nordhausen, it began its drive again on the 12 April followed by the 415th Infantry mopping up in its zone of advance. The 3d Armored Division continued its drive to

(46) Personal knowledge; (47) Personal knowledge; (48 and 49) A-3, p. 337; Personal knowledge; (50) A-3, p. 338.

Sangerhausen, at which time it turned northeast and crossed the Saale River 13 April at Friederberg. (51)

The 415th Infantry, after being passed through by Task Force Kelleher, was given the mission of following the Task Force and mopping up all by-passed enemy resistance. (52) The Task Force Commander did not constitute a reserve for this attack. (53)

The axis of signal communication was along the main highway to Reinstedt and then southeast along the route followed by Task Force Clark. The locations of the Command Post and separate units would be Rossla, then Teuschenthal, then in Halle. (54)

#### THE ATTACK OF TASK FORCE KELLEHER

The forward move began according to plan at 1200 14 April 1945. The first resistance encountered was by Task Force Rouge in the vicinity of Eisleben. This consisted of a few road blocks, covered by automatic weapons, and a few defensive positions within the town; but after a short fight these were soon reduced or by-passed. Task Force Clark had little or no trouble until it arrived at Zcherben. At this time, it ran into heavy flak and artillery fire from the vicinity of Halle. However, by 1800, both forces were in a position where they could overlook the Saale River and the city of Halle. (55)

The first and most important thing noticed was that the bridge across the river had been blown. From this indication, Colonel Kelleher knew that the enemy was preparing a

(51) (52) A-4, p. 250; A-3, p. 338; (53) Personal knowledge; statement of Lt. Col. Clark; 24 Nov 47; (54) Personal knowledge; (55) Personal knowledge; statement of Lt. Col. Clark, 24 Nov 47.

defensive position and planned to hold the city at all cost. An attempt to cross the river at the original planned crossing would be costly in both men and equipment. Acting quickly, the Task Force Commander contacted the 104th Infantry Division Commander and explained the situation to him. It was decided to change the plan of attack of the Task Force. At 0800 the 415th Infantry would move up and take over the positions now held by the attacking forces and they would move back west generally over the same route used in the initial advance. The move began as soon as they were relieved by the 415th Infantry. Task Force Clark was on the outside. After moving west out of range of enemy fire, the forces turned to the north with the mission of crossing the river over a bridge at Freiderburg. This bridge had been established over the Saale River by the 3d Armored Division earlier in the day. After the crossing was complete the forces were to go into an assembly area in the vicinity of Dessel and be prepared to attack Halle from the north at 0800 15 April 1945. (56)

This move was much more difficult than was planned. First there was no time for prior reconnaissance, there was no prescribed or marked routes, no guides or guards and the communication and coordination between the tanks and Infantry Commanders was very poor. Above all, this move was made at night under blackout conditions on one of the darkest nights imaginable. (57)

(56) A-4, p. 250; A-3, p. 338; Personal knowledge; (57) Personal knowledge; statement of Lt. Col. Clark, 24 Nov 47.

The Task Forces took practically the entire night for this move. For instance: Lt. Col. Clark's Task Force moved some 20 "round about" miles, before arriving at the bridge. In spite of the difficulties this move was finally completed by both forces and they were in position to launch the attack on the city at 0800 15 April. (58)

When the attack jumped-off Lt. Col. Rouge was still in the lead, followed by Lt. Col. Clark. They spearheaded down through Wettin, then across to the main highway leading into the city. This highway leads into Magdeburger street, along which the Task Forces advanced into the city, arriving in the outskirts at about 0900. (59) For this and the remainder of the Battle for Halle, let us refer to Map No. 4.

The resistance encountered during the night move and up until now was practically nil. It was beginning to appear as though the forces would capture the city, with little or no resistance. But, as the head of Task Force Rouge pushed into the city abreast <sup>of</sup> the Zoological Gardens and Anger Street, they met what was apparently the enemy main line of resistance. The resistance increased tremendously and consisted of road blocks, snipers, automatic weapons, flak fire and panzerfausts. (60)

Task Force Clark swung off to the left of Task Force Rouge and moved across to Kuttener Street, proceeded south abreast of Task Force Rouge and took up the fighting. The increase in resistance brought the Infantry down from the

(58) Personal knowledge; statement of Lt. Col. Clark, 24 Nov 47; (59) Personal knowledge; statement of Lt. Col. Clark, 24 Nov 47; (60) Personal knowledge; statement of Col. Kelleher and Lt. Col. Clark, 24 Nov 47; A-3, p. 339.

tanks and trucks. The companies formed into small fighting teams of tanks and Infantry. These teams normally consisted of two tanks, a tank destroyer, a section of machine guns and from 2 squads to a platoon of Infantry. The coordination and the control between the tank and infantry became much more difficult. There was no prescribed formation for the movement of these teams. It was more or less dependent upon the type of resistance being met. Sometimes the infantry would proceed the tanks and vice versa. But, regardless of who was in the lead, they always continued giving close support and protection to each other. Normally the tanks moved down the streets protected by the infantry on either side. (61)

The fighting continued throughout the day, progress being very slow. The units were having to fight with only their organic weapons for support; there was no air or artillery used during this attack, as the commander decided that the destruction of the city would reduce his advantage and increase the advantage of the defender. Too, there was a large number of civilian and allied prisoner of war hospitals in the city. The only support used was the 81mm and heavy machine guns. (62)

Once again, at night, the outside force<sup>rfe</sup> received orders to encircle the city to the east. This plan was accomplished by moving back north, then east and finally south. This move was designed to cut off all the exits open to the enemy,

(61) Personal knowledge; statement of Col. Kelleher and Lt. Col. Clark, 24 Nov 47; (62) Personal knowledge.

prevent him from bringing up replacements or reinforcements, supplies and finally tightening the band around the city, thereby restricting his mobility. This move followed no particular route, and generally the Task Force moved along Anger Street across to the air field, turned south and came down behind the railroad yards, then crossed Leipzig Street and turned southwest at the brick factory and cut across to the Saale River. (63)

By daylight the following morning the encirclement of the city was completed with the exception of Leipzig Street, *This latter street not being blocked* which was a result of poor coordination and communications on the part of the Infantry and the tanks. However the tanks did arrive later in the morning and the open street was promptly blocked.

Now the biggest job still lay ahead -- that of assaulting the city and capturing the objective. The greatest part of this task fell to Lt. Col. Rouge's forces. During the time Task Force Clark was making the encirclement, Task Force Rouge was continuing its attack in the city. The formation of the 3d Battalion had now spread out and taken over the positions held by the 1st Battalion, small teams were still operating and the companies were disposed thusly: "I" Company in the center, made the main effort along Reil-Bernberger Street, "K" Company on the right and "L" Company on the left, with some support received from "M" Company. (64)

At this time the civilian population became a great menace, as the town was far above normal population with

(63) Personal knowledge, statements of Col. Kelleher and Lt. Col. Clark, 24 Nov 47; (64) Personal knowledge; A-3, p. 340.

hundreds of refugees and displaced persons who had been driven in from other parts and fighting fronts. For the most part the civilian population was hostile, even going so far as to snipe at the troops, hurl Panzerfausts on tanks and vehicles and disrupt communications by cutting our wire lines. The Task Force Military Government was not set up to accomodate such a huge number of civilians, and the troops that it would take to guard these civilians could not be taken from the fighting forces, so it was necessary to get along the best way possible under such circumstances. (65)

The second day Task Force Rouge continued its progress of slow house-to-house fighting meeting very heavy small arms fire, flak, automatic weapons fire and Panzerfausts. The defenders were employing strong street blocks, using ground, and cellar floors of buildings for sniping, in a vain effort to stop the attackers. This stubborn resistance made it necessary for the troops to search every house and every individual room therein. In many instances the only way to get the "Superman" out was to blast him with grenades or go in after him with the bayonet. (66) Since Halle was still standing with practically no damage the civilian leaders realized that there was very little need to continue the fighting and began to make preparations to declare Halle an open city. The 104th Division G-2, (Lt. Col. Mark S. Plaister) after finding out the feelings of the civilians decided to aid them, so on the morning of 15 April, Lt. Col. Plaister had 100,000 leaflets printed and dropped over the city. These

(65) Personal knowledge; (66) A-3, p. 340; Personal knowledge, statement of Col. Kelleher, 24 Nov 47.

read, and I quote: "MEN AND WOMEN OF HALLE complete destruction threatens your city. Either Halle will surrender unconditionally or it will be destroyed.

At the present stage of war, surrender is the only choice. We Americans do not wage war against innocent civilians. Already, millions of your fellow countrymen live peacefully in territory occupied by us and help rebuild Germany. If, however, the military commander and the party leaders do not want to prevent bloodshed, we have no other alternative but to completely destroy Halle."

"MEN AND WOMEN OF HALLE

Your homes are still standing. Your homes still offer you refuge. Until now, your city has been spared the fate of so many other German cities. You can still save yourselves and your city by acting immediately. Go to the responsible authorities to prevent senseless bloodshed and complete destruction. This is the hour to act. The time is short. In a few hours it will be too late. There is only one choice - - -

SURRENDER OR DESTRUCTION". (67)

Also on the same afternoon, Al Newman, a newspaper correspondent located Count Von Luckner, a submarine ace of the first world war. The count explained to Mr. Newman that he would like to talk to the American commander for the purpose of arranging neutral areas for civilians and allied prisoners of war, and to discuss surrender terms. Immediately the submarine ace was brought to Task Force Kelleher's Headquarters, which at this time was located just inside the north edge of

(67) A-3, p. 339.

town across the street from the junction of Magdeburger Street and Kuttener Street. Here a discussion was held between the Division Commander, Colonel Kelleher and Count Von Luckner. The American Commander would agree only to unconditional surrender. The Count being used for a messenger was returned to the front line to contact the German Commander (Major General Fritz De Witt) and to hold a meeting of the military and civilian authorities during the night. The purpose was to get them to accept the unconditional surrender terms. (68)

While this was being accomplished, the task force Commander feeling almost certain that the terms would be accepted gave the order at 1800 to cease fire. (69)

Undoubtedly the meeting was held as planned but the German Commander did not accept the surrender terms. This word was returned to Colonel Kelleher during the night of 15-16 April. This meant that the plan for an "open city" or unconditional surrender never did materialize. However, it was agreed by the German Commander that he would withdraw all military forces to the south of the city and take up positions generally along Linden Street. (69)

At 0600, 16 April, Task Force Rouge began his house-to-house fighting again. This time meeting the stiffest resistance that he had thus far met in this entire operation. Undoubtedly, the "open city" plan backfired on the Task Force Commander. It gave the Germans an opportunity to

(68) A-13, p. 30, 31; A-3, p. 340, 341; (69) A-13, p. 30, 31; A-3, p. 340, 341; Personal knowledge.

establish new and stronger positions and resupply the troops; but by a combination of automatic weapons, mortars, grenades, bayonets, tank-infantry teams, and the skillful maneuvering of the veteran troops, Lt. Col. Rouge's force was always able to gain ground against the German defenses. The battle raged throughout the day until about dark. By this time, Task Force Rouge had advanced to a general east-west line along the water tower, University Street, and the end of Bernberger Street. Here the withdrawal agreement made between the two commanders were put into effect. (70)

The withdrawal of the German troops offered several advantages to the attackers. One being that it would be possible to capture about a third of the city without having to fight for it. The second being that, Task Force Rouge would be able to reorganize and resupply the troops for the attack on the remaining portion of the city. A third being that the troops would be able to get a hot meal and some rest without so much harassment.

On the morning of the 17 April, the Task Force began its move through the open third of the city. The movement was slow and cautious. The exact location of the enemy was unknown at this time. However, it was certain that they were located somewhere in the last third of the city around Linden Street. The resistance met during the move was very little, except for some sniper fire. At 1900 the forces again made contact with the Germans in hastily organized positions along Linden Street. After determining this was

(70) Personal knowledge.

the Main Line of Resistance, the decision was made to button-up for the night and resume the attack at 0600 next morning. During the night, the SS troops and the die-hard Hitler youth attempted several counterattacks against the Task Force positions. Each time these were soon repelled. (71)

The morning of 18 April found the Task Force ready to begin what they hoped was the last drive in an attempt to finish the battle for Halle. The resistance met was the same type that had been met thus far in the city. The German forces were in their last stand and they were still determined to stop the attacker's advance. About the only choice they had left was to fight or surrender. Task Force Clark had them cut off from the east and south, 415th Infantry across the River had them cut off to the west and Task Force Rouge was continuing its drive, slowly gaining ground against their defenses. By night, Task Force Rouge had pushed in about half the remaining distance. Again the only night operation was to set up defenses against counterattacks and resume the attack next morning. (72)

At 0600, on the last and final day, the fighting was continued; and at 1055 19 April the city of Halle was surrendered to Task Force Kelleher. The offensive of Saale River and the capture of Halle netted the Task Forces approximately 4,000 prisoners. The Task Force had none captured and the minimum killed and wounded. (73)

(71) A-3, p. 340; personal knowledge; (72) A-3, p. 341, 340, 338, 339; Personal knowledge; (73) A-3, p. 341, 340, 338, 339; Personal knowledge.

## ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

In analyzing and criticizing this operation it must be born in mind that the operation was a definite success. For this reason, it is somewhat difficult to criticize definite actions and make a flat statement that they were wrong, because after all the best test of any military plan, operation or action whether of units or individuals is found in the fact of whether or not desired results were obtained and with a minimum of time and expenditure of effort.

With these thoughts, let us analyze the specific actions of Task Force Kelleher and compare them with accepted teachings and factors to be considered in city fighting.

The present trend of teaching in fighting for cities, is that it is carried out in two phases. The first phase, being the attacking forces capture a bridgehead within the city on as wide a front as possible to mislead the enemy and to secure the greatest number of jump-off points from which to launch the Second phase. (74)

Prior to and during this phase, a commander is faced with many factors, upon which he has to make a decision. Let us go back and list some of the more important factors and see the decision's that were made by Colonel Kelleher and just what caused him to make his decisions.

Before we go into detail on the factors, it is granted that the first phase of city fighting as taught, was definitely followed by the Task Force and it is based upon very sound principles. This was proven in this operation when

(74) A-12, p. 62, 63, 64, 65.

the Task Force drove into the city for five blocks, and continued fighting, with Task Force Clark and Rouge abreast. After the Task Force Commander was sure he had a foothold within the city, Task Force Clark was ordered to encircle the city.

The most important factors that a commander has to study and analyze, and make a decision on are: (75)

- (a) The time available prior to the attack.
- (b) The nature of terrain and enemy capabilities.
- (c) The element of surprise.
- (d) The type of construction of the buildings within the city.
- (e) Reconnaissance and rehearsals.
- (f) The use of support by Air and Artillery.
- (g) His plan of attack, formation and line of departure.
- (h) The degree of training and experience of the attacking troops.
- (i) Means of communication between and coordination between the Tank and Infantry.

In analyzing these factors, it would be better that they be analyzed one at a time. The time that was available is felt to have been far short to be adequate for proper rehearsal and planning. It must be remembered that the objective assigned to the Task Force was approximately fifty-two (52) miles to the east, with some twenty-eight (28) miles being held by the enemy. In addition his forces were being used on an entirely different mission. In spite of

(75) A-12, p. 61, 62, 64; A-11, p. 172, 173, 174.

this fact, Colonel Kelleher did accomplish much in his prior planning, reconnaissance, organization, orders and preparation for the attack; but the fact can't be overlooked that he failed initially to take into consideration the possibility of crossing the river at Fried~~berg~~<sup>berg</sup> and attacking Halle from the north.

The Task Force Commander analyzed the terrain and realized that the only major objective that lay in his advance was the Saale River. He also knew that if the enemy was to defend in strength it would be behind the Saale River. Therefore, the Commander knew his biggest problem would be the crossing of this river, but there were no prior preparations made for the river crossing. The decision was made to advance to the river and attempt to capture a bridge intact. However, this was not done.

The element of surprise was definately not gained in the original plan to attack from the east and cross the river in the center of Halle. This was very well brought out when the troops arrived within firing range and observation of the city. The attack forces came under a very heavy volume of fire and also found that all the bridges had been blown; on the other hand, there eas a very good example of surprise when the Task Force Commander changed his plan of attack from the east to the north. This was such a complete job of surprise that the Task Force was within the city before they were fired on.

The type of construction of the buildings within the city and the use of supporting artillery and air will be

analyzed in conjunction with each other. In the attack of a city, the defender already has the advantage. If the city is destroyed and the rubble and debris fill the streets, the defender is still at a far greater advantage. This also reduces the advantage that the attacker has and gives him far more work to do. Now, the writer doesn't mean to infer other factors which influenced the Task Force Commanders decision not to use air. These were the great civilian population that was in the city at this time and also the fact that this city had some eight or nine hospitals containing allied prisoners of war. It is the opinion of the writer the choice not to use air and artillery against this masonry constructed city was by far a greater advantage to the attacker than it would have been if he had used this destructive fire. Also there were a great number of civilian and allied prisoners saved by such a decision.

Due to the shortage of time for a rehearsal and a proper reconnaissance, the task force was unable to have a rehearsal and did very little personal reconnaissance. This fact was well emphasized when the task force did not discover the bridges were blown before they arrived on the east bank of the Saale River. Had there been a proper reconnaissance originally, it would have saved much time and effort to have attacked the city from the north, instead of waiting until they first arrived on the east bank of the river and have a complete change of plan and a change in direction of attack. The change in plan and direction of the attack placed an

extra burden on the troops. For example, it took them practically all night to go some eight miles over a "round about" way of twenty miles.

His plan of attack was sound. The original intention was to spearhead across to the river then cross the river and attack through the city to split it in two, after which, he could isolate the defenders into many separate pockets and then reduce the pockets. Again this plan didn't work because of the failure of reconnaissance and a proper estimate of the situation.

The formation that was used was very good, but it is the writer's opinion that the commander should have held out a reserve of some size, even though it may not have been more than one company. The line of departure was well chosen, because it was the forward advance of the friendly troops. However, it was far from being an ideal line of departure, because it was too far from the objective and it was too far forward of the assembly area. But under these circumstances it was the best that could be chosen for this particular operation.

The task force Commander didn't have too much to worry about when he started to consider the degree of training and experience of his troops. With the exception of the latest replacements, the troops were all well-trained and experienced veterans.

There was a definite lack of coordination between the tank and Infantry. Most of it was the fault of the means of

communication and the fact that the tanks and infantry were not trained together as a team. To be a successful tank-infantry team it is essential that they work and train together as teams prior to combat.

The lack of this coordination was well illustrated in Task Force Clark's encirclement of the city. The tanks were much later than the infantry in accomplishing their mission.

Now let us go into the second phase of the fighting in a city and analyze it similar to the first phase. The second phase is the actual assault through the built-up area to capture the entire objective. During this phase the Commander is faced with many factors on which he must make a decision. Some of these factors arise with the Commander in phase one, but he does not take any definite action on these until he has completed phase one.

The major factor of phase two, facing the commander are: (76)

- (a) Encirclement of the city.
- (b) Isolation of the defenders into as many separate pockets as possible.
- (c) Covering fires and close in protection.
- (d) Street fighting.
- (e) Attitude of the civilians.
- (f) Use of the Reserves.
- (g) Surrender or "open city".

The encirclement of the city should be done, whenever it is humanly possible. This gives a very definite advantage to the attacker by cutting off the defender's supplies, and

(76) A-11, p. 172-174; A-12, p. 61-64.

making it impossible for the defender to reinforce his defenses by the new reserves that he would otherwise be able to bring forward. The enveloping force may also be able to support the attackers by fire. If possible this should be in conjunction with Phase One or immediately after the completion of Phase One. In this operation, Colonel Kelleher performed this task beautifully. After he was sure he had a bridgehead into the city and there was no possibility of the enemy breaking through the attacking force, the decision was made to encircle the city. This was done at night with the hope that he could also gain surprise. Let's also remember that the 415th Infantry was deployed on the east bank of the Saale River. Since there had to be a definite change in the plan of attack it was impossible to isolate the groups into many small pockets. The equivalent was accomplished by reducing the city on a wide front thereby isolating him into one big pocket. From the direction of the Task Force attack it is the opinion of the writer that this gave the attacking force greater advantages than the isolation into small groups would have provided. Covering fires and close in protection should always be coordinated and provided regardless of the size of the attacking force. During this attack there was very good covering fire and protection. The infantry protected the tanks from close in anti-tank weapons and from civilians or soldiers who might attempt to destroy the tanks by whatever means that were available. The tanks gave the Infantry covering fire from their long range weapons and close in protection with their

automatic weapons. This is definitely essential in city fighting, otherwise without protection and covering fires the tanks would not last long.

Street fighting is dependent upon the type of units doing the fighting. When tanks are fighting in a city, as in this operation, they have to fight in the streets, whereas if the Infantry is fighting alone they are able to avoid the middle of the streets. Whenever the tanks and Infantry are employed together this increases the risk of the Infantry and decreases the risk of the tanks. In the face of this, the Task Force Commander made the decision to use the combined teams. In doing so, he was able to employ a greater striking force, more fire power, greater shock action and a greater psychological effect.

In any operation, the commander should always consider the attitude of the civilians, and for the most part, the citizens of Halle were very hostile. This caused the attacker to have to furnish more protection for the tanks and lines of communications. There were many instances of the civilians using Panzerfaust and grenades against the Task Force. The communications were interrupted many times by the wire cutting tactics of the civilians.

In the attack, normally a reserve is withheld by the commander to influence future action. They may be employed on many missions, such as exploiting success of assaulting echelons, striking final blows to capture objectives, replacing exhausted units, repelling counterattacks, protecting flanks or maintaining contact. Any one or all of the

above missions were unable to be accomplished during this operation, because there was no reserve.

During the second day of this operation there was an attempt to get the German Commander to surrender the city. However, this was never agreed upon, but the terms of an "open city" for the center of the city was agreed upon. Either one of these two are definite advantages to the attacker. In the first place, if the enemy surrenders it means that the objective is captured without a fight. In the second place if the enemy agrees on declaring a certain part of the city as an "open city" accept this too, because you gain this portion of the city without having to fight. The one thing that must be insured is that the agreement is understood and final with the enemy.

In summarizing the analysis, it was definitely proven that the teaching and major factors to be considered in city fighting are very sound. In order to be successful and obtain desired results in a minimum of time and with a minimum expenditure of effort it is almost imperative that the attacking forces use the teaching as laid down for city fighting.

However, the writer would like to criticize the Task Force Commander on three major factors. The first, when he failed to make proper plans and reconnaissance. It is felt that if he had made the proper reconnaissance the Task Force Commander would have saved time in the capture of the city and reduced the effort.

The second, that the Task Force Commander failed to

withhold a reserve. It is not believed that he was justified in so doing. In the opinion of the writer he should have withheld a reserve regardless of how small it would have been.

The third criticism was that the Task Force Commander made one serious error when he issued the order to "cease firing". This was done before the Task Force Commander was sure that a final agreement had been reached with the German Commander.

### LESSONS LEARNED

Some of the more important lessons emphasized by this operation are:

1. That attacks rarely progress as planned. The Commander's plan should be flexible enough to allow it to be altered to exploit favorable developments or to overcome unforeseen obstacles.
2. If the Commander desires to have coordination and communication between tanks and Infantry, it is essential that they <sup>must</sup> train and rehearse together as teams prior to commitment to battle. They must have the proper means of communication.
3. Prior to any operation the Commander and subordinate leaders should be allotted sufficient time to make a thorough reconnaissance. In this reconnaissance no capabilities of the enemy should be overlooked.
4. Wire communications in cities must be protected against possible destruction by hostile civilians.
5. In making arrangements for an "open city" make sure

that both sides understand the terms of any such agreement.

6. That, if the Commander wishes to obtain the maximum effectiveness from the use of his tanks he <sup>be</sup> must provide them with close-in protection.

7. The Commander before ordering his tanks to move during darkness should take into consideration the time and the difficulties tanks have in moving during the hours of darkness.

8. Air and artillery support is not required in attack on enemy cities, however, proper consideration must be given to its possible use.

9. When a Commander orders a unit to move he should give them definite routes over which to move and make certain that they know and understand their route.

10. Cutting of the enemy rear, denying supplies or withdrawal materially reduces the enemy's will to resist.

11. Infantry that fights with tanks should train with them so that each can capitalize on the capabilities and know the limitations of the other.

12. Tanks attract enemy fire, and when employed with Infantry may cause excessive casualties to Infantry.

13. There is no general rule of precedence for tank-Infantry employment. The situation may call for tanks to proceed ahead of the Infantry, behind the Infantry, or abreast of the Infantry. The Commander on the ground must make the decision in each case.